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FY15 Q4 Report: November 1 – December 31, 2015

**Program: Advancing Solutions for Peace through Intercommunity
Reconciliation and Engagement (ASPIRE)**

Submitted: January 29, 2016



Peace committees and Peer Educators selection by Community at Kankan

PROJECT SUMMARY

Award No: AID-OAA-A-14-00024

Start Date: November 1 2015

End Date: October 31, 2017

Report Date: January 31 , 2016

Total Award: 1,999,986 USD

A. Executive Summary

The goal of Advancing Solutions for Peace through Intercommunity Reconciliation and Engagement (ASPIRE) is to enable community leaders of all faiths and disaffected youth to work together to peacefully manage inter-group tensions, rebuild community cohesion and strengthen pluralism in the strategic town of Bouar. This will be achieved through a holistic people-to-people approach that: 1) facilitates inclusive, community-led processes to mitigate current and future conflicts; 2) increases economic cooperation across lines of division; and 3) positively changes attitudes towards tolerance and non-violence.

During this period, Mercy Corps began networking with local authorities, major religious platforms, and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to lay the foundation for implementation. Mercy Corps also began coordination meetings with partner INGOs, such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Cordaid, UN agencies and other organizations with social cohesion programs.

Mercy Corps organized a total of 20 meetings in Bouar and surrounding villages to present the program and inform communities on their need to be involved in the program. Meetings mobilized around 514 people including local leaders, disabled persons, youth, women representatives, religious leaders and other key community actors.

B. Program Overview

During this period, Mercy Corps has established a firm foundation for the launch of a strong social cohesion program in Bouar. The following activities are in place to achieve program objectives:

- Conducted a kick-off meeting with all Mercy Corps departments to present the program and orient each Department on their roles and responsibilities
- Developed new program Performance Monitoring Plan, and Work Plan submitted to USAID on December 11, 2015.
- Recruited and deployed staff including the Program Manager, M&E Assistant, Program Assistant, Program Facilitator, Sub Grant Officer and Driver Bouar.
- A rapid questionnaire was designed as part of the baseline survey. Eight surveyors have been identified and will be trained during January 2016. Mercy Corps will conduct the survey in Bouar in preparation for the main start-up assessment.
- Informed six groups in Bouar, six axe village communities and religious leaders as well as civil society organizations, local authorities, youth and women's organization representatives about the details of ASPIRE in preparation for the establishment of peace committees for social cohesion and Peer Educators (PEs).
- Developed and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bouar Inter-Religious Platform (BIRP) describing roles and responsibilities between Mercy Corps and the BIRP.
- Established nine Peace committees in Bouar and in five of the six areas of intervention.
- Tested, and selected 34 Peer Educators through rigorous selection criteria'.

Security

During the current implementation period, Bouar was calm with minor security incidents including attempted attacks on the police by an armed man who wanted to release prisoners. On December 23, 2015, an Anti Balaka fighter fired during Martin Ziguélé's campaign meeting in Bouar. He was arrested by public forces.

Several security incidents were reported on the axes such as Garoua Boulai; Bouar-Bangui; Bouar-Baoro, where citizens looted vehicles and even killed some passengers. On the Baboua-Besson' axe, in the week of 21 to 25 December 2015, several agents of the National Agency for Livestock Development (ANDE) were kidnapped by the Anti Balaka group which stripped them of their belongings and released them after holding them for nearly 10 hours.

In the village Niem-Yelewa, clashes between groups of the Fulani commander named SIDIKI assimilated to be ex-Seleka and Anti-Balaka group which resulted in the death of seven citizens. It was also reported that 7 FACA (Forces Armées Centrafricaines) soldiers who provided security for the Mayor of Niem were attacked and disarmed by the Anti-Balaka who used their weapons to fight against the ex-Seleka group.

C. Performance Summary

Staff recruitment: During November, Mercy Corps recruited all national staff including the PM Assistant, three Facilitators, the M&E Assistant and the Sub grant Officer. Mercy Corps also made an offer to the Program Manager. After a kick off meeting and an orientation session on the program, the team was deployed to Bouar.

Project Presentation: In November and beginning of December 2015, Mercy Corps organized around 10 meetings with local authorities (Prefect, Sous-Prefect, Mayor, neighborhood Chiefs), UN agency representatives, religious and community leaders, women and youth association representatives, civil society representatives to present the project and to obtain the buy-in of all parties. Mercy Corps also began coordination meetings with INGO representatives as well as with BIRP.

In addition to those meetings, Mercy Corps presented the ASPIRE program to community members in six selected areas including axe 1) Bouar to Baoro (Kpocote, Ngaïdo, Koursou), 2) axe Bouar-Bozoum (Dikofio and Kakan), 3) axe Bouar Boccaranga (Beninga, Kelladougou, and Yongoro), 4) axe Bouar-Bea (Bea, and Bayande), 5) axe Bouar-Ndongue (Zotoa and Ndogue), and axe Bouar-Niem. The meetings mobilized 520 people including 104 women. It was an opportunity for community members to ask questions, and to fully understand their roles and responsibilities for successful program implementation.

Objective 1: Facilitate inclusive, community-led processes to mitigate current and future conflicts

Activity1.1. Form 10 Peace Committees comprised of community leaders, women, and youth, that meet regularly to review rising tensions and inter-group dispute resolution, and discuss interventions.

During this period, Mercy Corps organized several meetings with the BIRP to develop the selection criteria to determine the number of Peace Committees (PC) as well as their location. Mercy Corps and BIRP decided to put in place peace committees in communities where tensions exist between groups and advocate for Muslim community member representation as well as their participation in each Peace Committee. In this regard, Mercy Corps and BIRP put in place 9 of the 10 Peace Committees. Each Peace Committee is comprised of 7 members for a total of 63 members for the 9 PC formed including 12 Muslim members. Selection focused on relevant criteria such as influence within the community,

dynamic and positive personalities with leadership potential, passion for peace-building and ending conflict etc. Each Peace Committee represented a cross-section of the community: youth, local leaders, men and women, and representatives of parties in conflict. The remaining Peace committee will be put in place during the next reporting period when security has improved in Niem where an unidentified group has continued fighting.

Table N°1: Detail of Peace Committees

Locations	Number of Peace Committee	Number of member	Entities				
			Leaders		Women association	Youth	
			Men	Women	Women	Youth (M) (ages 18-35)	Youth (F) (ages 18-35)
Bouar Baoro	1	7	3	1	1	1	1
Bouar Bozoum	1	7	3	1	1	2	0
Bouar Ndongué	1	7	4	1	0	0	2
Bouar Béa	1	7	1	1	2	2	1
Bouar Bocaranga	1	7	3	1	1	1	1
Bouar	4	28	8	5	5	6	4
Total	9	63	22	10	10	12	9

Leaders will be trained during the first quarter of 2016.

Activity 1.2 Train Peace Committees in mediation, facilitation, dispute resolution, Do No Harm, and multi-stakeholder dialogue processes.

Mercy Corps developed and posted a consultant Scope of Work (Appendix 4) to train Peace Committee and BIRP members in mediation, facilitation, dispute resolution, Do No Harm, and Multi-stakeholder dialogue processes. Mercy Corps has already started receiving some candidacies which will be short-listed. The training is scheduled from March to May 2016 in Bouar.

Activity 1.3 Facilitate Peace Committees in organizing awareness sessions for community members to promote peaceful resolution of inter-group disputes and inter-group dialogue

During this period, Mercy Corps and BIRP worked together to identify areas where to put Peers Educators (PE) in place. They also agreed on selection criteria. Communities were informed about the selection criteria as well as the number of PEs to be selected. Following community meetings, Mercy Corps received in total 101 applications for Bouar. Mercy Corps and BIRP decided to organize a test. Test results (Appendix N°1: PEs test) revealed 21 people including 9 women were selected. To date, 63 PEs were selected including 10 women. Eleven of the selected PEs are former PEs from the previous SVC program.

Table N°2: Selected Peer Educators – location and religion

Locations	Number of Peer Educators			Religion	
	Women	Men	Total	Christian	Muslim
Bouar	9	12	21	15	6
Bouar –Baoro	0	4	4	4	0
Bouar- Bea	0	2	2	2	0
Bouar-Bozoum	0	2	2	2	0
Bouar-Bocaranga	1	2	3	3	0
Bouar-Ndongue	0	2	2	2	0
Bouar-Nième			0		
Total	10	24	34	28	6

Mercy Corps is finalizing the PEs contracts which will include new responsibilities such as community awareness on socio-economic project selection, project monitoring as well as working on Early Warning Early Response (EWER). The contract will be signed during the next reporting period.

Activity 1.4 Establish an early warning system to identify rising tensions before they become flashpoint conflicts.

Mercy Corps' Technical Support Unit consultant spent one week in CAR to work with the ASPIRE team to develop the *Guidelines and Recommendations for Early Warning Early Response System (EWER)* (see Appendix No 2). The document outlines the interaction between actors involved in data collection and rapid response mechanisms as well as their roles and responsibilities. Mercy Corps will use this document with Peace Committees, Peers Educators (PEs) and BIRP to facilitate amendments and comprehension of all program beneficiaries. PEs will collect data and report directly to BIRP who will be the focal point of contact with local authorities (Prefect, Gendarmerie, Police etc.) as well as with MINUSCA.

Mercy Corps met with MINUSCA as well as with Police and Gendarmerie commanders to discuss about EWER. All expressed their willingness to participate in the program. After EWER upcoming training in March and May 2016, Mercy Corps will continue its work with all stakeholders involved in Early Warning Rapid Response in Bouar with the aim to agree on roles and responsibilities and to validate the reporting mechanism as well as the tools, procedures and responses.

Objective 2: Increase economic cooperation across lines of division.

Activity 2.1 Peace Committees organize community fora in Bouar to solicit inter-group economic and social projects.

During this reporting period, a Technical Support Unit (TSU) consultant supported the ASPIRE team to develop project selection criteria (see appendix N°: Project selection criteria) focusing on two main categories 1) project selection criteria, and 2) community selection criteria. This included but was not limited to:

- Business has staff from multiple identity groups;
- Business has customers from multiple identity groups,

- Business pays staff from different identity groups at the same level/status/role the same salary,
- Project identified through consultation with multiple identity groups etc.

In addition to this, Mercy Corps designed a project presentation and submission template including information such as project holder information, budget, result, staffing, activities plan etc. Mercy Corps will dispatch this template to communities to submit their projects.

Activity 2.2: Peace Committees transparently assess and select 20 social and economic projects.

No update this reporting period.

Activity 2.3 Provide community members with training to build their financial, technical, vocational skills to ensure successful economic and social projects

The sub-grant officer and other ASPIRE team members are working on a training curriculum. This will be finalized before socio economic projects start and will be amended to include specific training focused on project type.

Objective 3: Positively change public attitudes towards tolerance and non-violence.

3.1 Local committees initiate conflict management and peacebuilding messaging campaign in Bouar that includes all groups

Mercy Corps had meetings with the two Bouar local radios: Radio Siriri and Radio Maïgaro to discuss future collaboration in peace message production and broadcasting. The two Radio stations expressed their willingness to participate in Peace Message production and broadcasting. Mercy Corps also started working with the BIRP who provided all Pope Francis' messages during his visit to the CAR in December 2015. Mercy Corps and BIRP leaders will work together to identify appropriate messages from the Pope speeches to be used for this purpose. Each of whom will also be interviewed and their messages will be broadcast through radios.

3.2 Local committees participate in a national forum to share lessons learned and success.

On November 25, 2015 Mercy Corps had a meeting with BIRP members during which BIRP members agreed that they will lead a pre-national forum in Bouar which will mobilize all Bouar conflict stakeholders. This pre-forum will be an opportunity to discuss topics that will be shared during the national forum in Bangui as well as an opportunity to identify, select and define roles and responsibilities of participants. Mercy Corps will provide funding to support the pre-forum and the BIRP participation to the national forum.

3.3 Outcome of the national forum communicated back to community members.

D. Monitoring & Evaluation

Baseline: Mercy Corps designed a rapid questionnaire as part of the baseline survey. The survey will be conducted the week of January 4, 2016, over a four-day period. Eight surveyors will be trained by Mercy Corps staff and tasked to complete 60 surveys each, for a total of 480. The survey is designed to gauge the attitudes and perceptions towards members of a different community, the level of confidence in leaders' ability to resolve conflicts, women and youth participation in peace building and decision making process, participation in national decision making process, and potential areas of economic collaboration.

E. Conclusion and Upcoming Activities

During this upcoming reporting period Mercy Corps will:

- Conduct baseline survey in Bouar and write the baseline study
- Train community leaders in conflict mitigation and multi-stakeholder dialogues
- Continue meeting with relevant CSOs, youth groups, schools, local authorities, women's associations on their potential role in project implementation
- Present Peer educators and Peace committees to communities
- Continue to participate in coordination meetings with others INGO and UN agencies
- Support BIRP leaders to put in place the peace committee in Niem.

Table 3: Activity Plan for upcoming quarter (FY16 Q1)

ASPIRE Program Work plan		Responsibles parties			
	Who	Jan	Feb-16	Mar-16	
Program Start Up					
Develop and sign partnership MoU with Bouar Inter-religious platform	PM				
Design and conduct baseline community survey	M&E Mgr.				
M&E training with project staff (tools, M&E system, etc.)	M&E Mgr.				
Objective 1: Facilitate inclusive, community-led processes to mitigate current and future conflicts.					
Activity 1.1: Form 10 Peace Committees of community leaders and youth that regularly identify and discuss tensions and resolve disputes	PM				
Activity 1.2: Train Peace Committees in mediation, facilitation, dispute resolution, Do No Harm, and multi-stakeholder dialogue	PM				
Activity 1.3: Facilitate Peace Committees in organizing awareness sessions to promote peaceful resolution of inter-group disputes and dialogue	PM				
Activity 1.4: Establish an early warning system to identify rising tensions.	PM				
Quality, Monitoring and Program mid-term evaluation					
Data quality Assessment and field quality monitoring	M&E Mgr.				
Quarterly Review Meeting conducted by M&E	M&E Mgr.				
Setup Database for the project	M&E Mgr.				